

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

MAY, 1978.

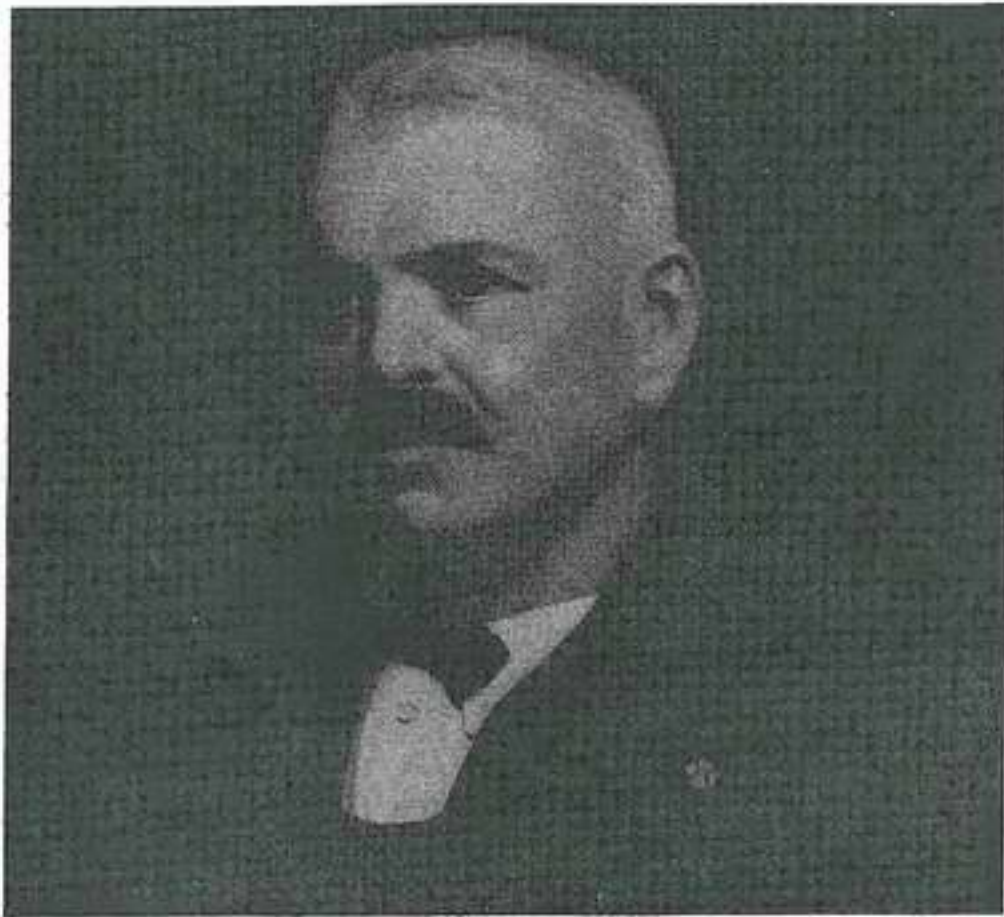
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THE
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OF THE
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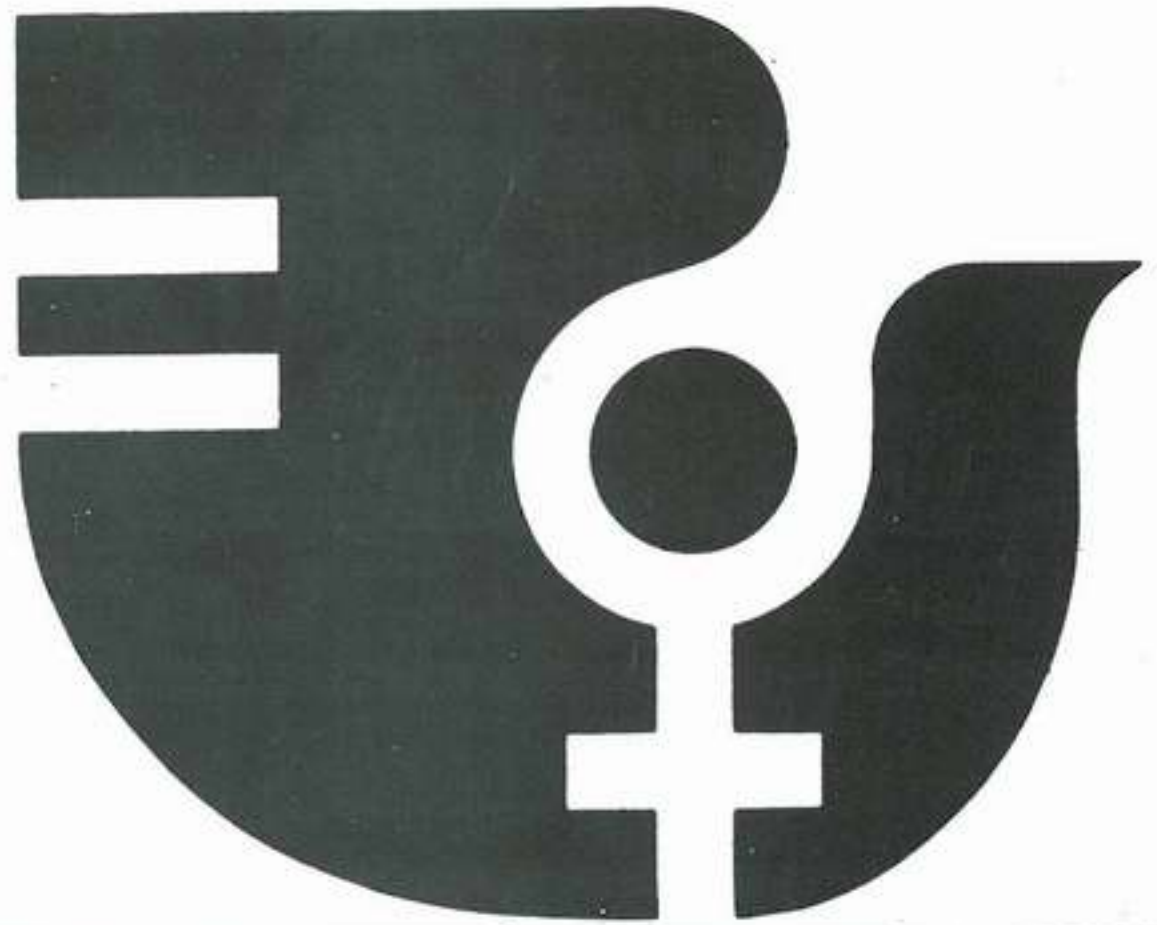
'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic ...' *James Connolly*

DOGGY CROSS

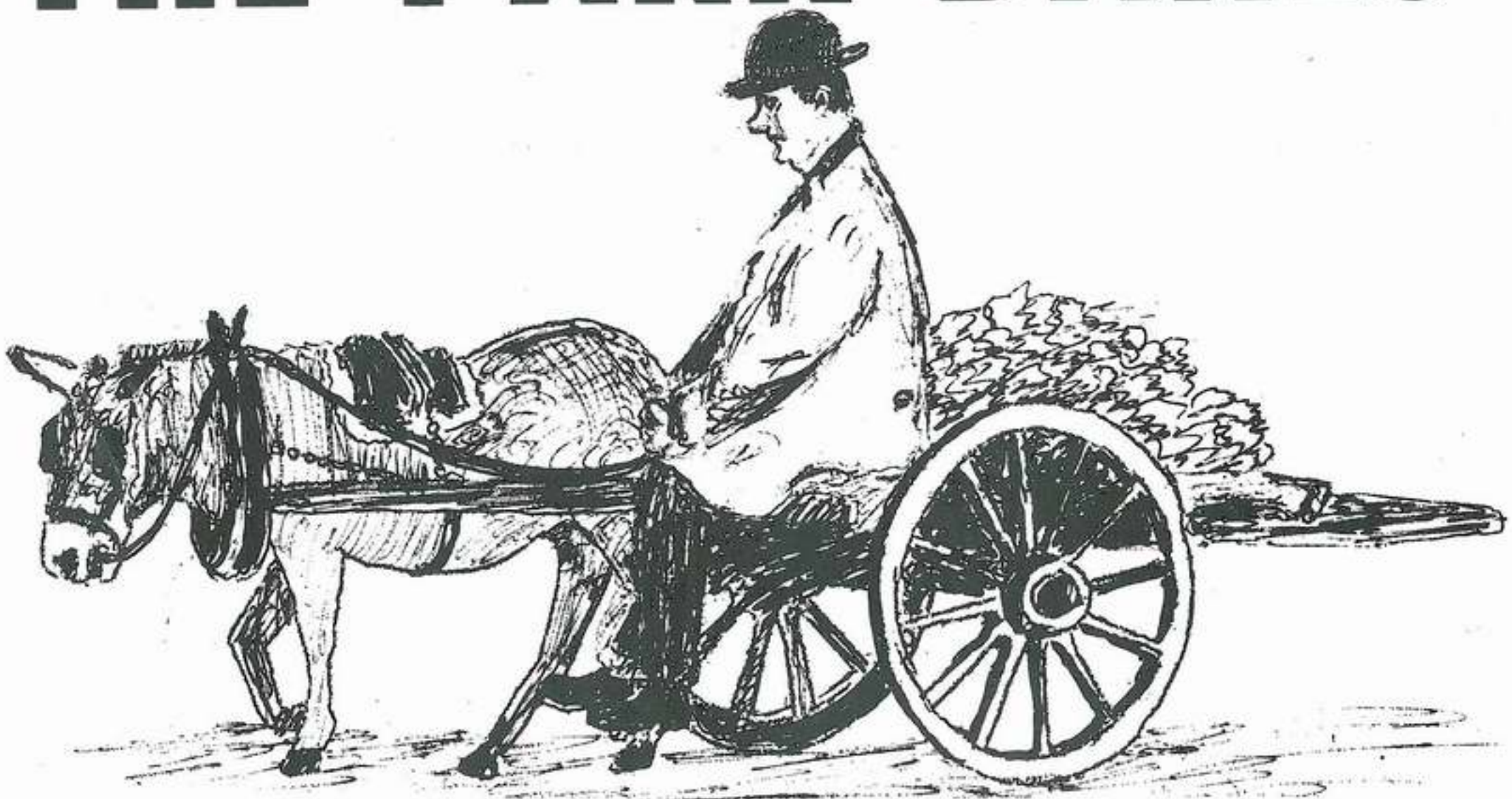


AN EARLY PICTURE OF JIMMY "DOGGY" CROSS

FAMILY PLANNING BREAKTHROUGH



THE PARK DANES



MIKE DANAGHER

DIVIDED WE STAND!

WHAT A RELIEF; there's never going to be a united Ireland! Paypatriotism, and that's the way to spell it, has won the day. Out of all the statistics thrown up in the BBC's Panorama programme, also broadcast by RTE, there is solid confirmation of the message I've been driving home for years: only a minority is prepared to pay *in money*, mark that!, to have the utterly different peoples in the two states of Ireland lumped into an uneasy alliance. The statistic that all the publicists shunned except, give the devil his due, the *Irish Press* is the real Eire Nua one: 51 per cent of the Panorama poll would not agree to pay a penny more in taxation for unity. Tim Pat Coogan, editor of the *Irish Press*, thought it outrageous. I can think of something that would be a much graver outrage – the acceptance by the people of this unfortunate part of the island of Ireland of a massive bribe from Britain by which taxation might actually be reduced *pro tem*. if we agreed to take over the Northern nest of vipers. With that lot of ultras to assuage, Catholic and Calvinist, our way of life, tattered as it is, would be no more. Seventy-seven executions each morning and evening for years might, just might, bring the ensuing Civil War to an end.

It is a pity that a section of the people in the Republic will still go on whistling in the dark about a united Ireland instead of bending its energies trying to save the day for the tens of thousands of unfortunates here at home in the Republic. A pity the die-hards will not be silenced like the way a publichouse braggart is when invited to put his money where his mouth is. Of course, that pragmatic 51 per cent (or mean, anti-national bastards if you like) would be joined by quite a few more if the Panorama poll-questions were worded by an economist. One of the questions would almost certainly be: Will you agree to pay double the present Income Tax for a united Ireland?

I'm not pulling the long bow. In West Belfast alone there are 10,000 people on the dole and each one of them, like everyone on Social Welfare, every pensioner, every deaf, dumb, or blind person in the North, is drawing relief on a much higher scale and at a lower age (60 for women, 65 for men) than in the Republic. Moreover, the new Republic would also be called on to find another £800 million to keep just Harland & Woolf's 8,500 workers in employment. If the government of a united Ireland attempted to put that lot alone on the streets it would need a good-size army to keep them quiet.

Somehow I can't see Paddy Lane's men forking out dole money on the Northern Ireland scale and, of course, the higher benefits and pensions would have to be paid for all Ireland; no government, even one so full of nationalistic fervour as in a Tim Pat Coogan whiskey dream, could offer the Apprentice Boys more than true-born republicans, or republicans less. Would not everyone have to be cherished equally? Once and for all let's call the whole thing off.

The day any Irishman is prepared to pay for a 32-County Republic in pound notes, hard-earned, I'll believe him. The Republic for All-Ireland was never more than another dream in Padraig Pearse's eye. The dreadful thing is that young men are rotting in jail, and other men and women are being killed and maimed for this myth. Fianna Fail the Republican Party and, to a lesser extent, Fine Gael and the Irish Labour Party must here share the blame. We should try minding our own business, especially when it is patent we are not all that good at it. Brits Out? – Oh, wouldn't those Brits be glad to be out – another economy of British lives and British money!

VANDALISM by young people has caused at least one Limerick priest to lose his cool, to come out on the streets supported by I have no doubt well-meaning people who are

BY DERMOT MCEVOY

appalled by what seems to be senseless destructiveness. They demand retribution and to a man look to the birch and lots of Loughan Houses to restore 'order'. But vandalism is a world-wide phenomenon; all these 'remedies' have been tried; all have failed. There is NO CURE for our vandalism any more than there is a cure for vandalism in any other city of the Western world: it is, as any sociologist or psychologist will tell you if you'll listen, a by-product of Western urban industrial civilisation: in other words, you cannot have the civilisation you are more or less enjoying without the concomitant vandalism. It is, of course, hard to take, but there you cannot have action without equal and opposite reaction; no rose without thorn. If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen. OK?

By the way, Catholic West Belfast, one of the most rigidly, religiously segregated parts of the North, is one of the most lawless and I don't mean *vis-a-vis* the Brits; the controlling element there is not the RUC; it is the Provisional IRA. Here's how the Provos deal with law and order according to David McKittrick in the *Irish Times*:

The Provisionals have tried their hand at policing, carrying out a knee-capping here and there – but such efforts have done nothing to lead to a more settled life in the ghetto ... the prevailing mood is one of resignation.

Not many cities 'law-enforcers have gone as far as knee-capping (i.e. maiming for life) though they do chop off hands in strict Islamic countries, but, as that's not a success, it looks as if Limerick priests and people will have to come up with something new. Torquemada, where are you now when you're needed?

NOT all employment is worthwhile. Asahi's cyanide can kill from the port of Dublin to Killala: an aluminium (bauxite) smelter can unless great care is taken murder for ever an environment in red mud from the Shannon to Kerry and beyond: worst of all killers is asbestos. Yet our High Court is allowing the Irish Industrial Development Authority and Raybestos-Manhattan to dump deadly asbestos waste next to a national school at Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork. One speck, visible only under a powerful microscope, breathed in can cause years of chronic illness and kill a lifetime later. An English woman, who worked for less than a year in 1927 – that's 51 years ago – in an asbestos factory died this year from asbestosis after years of chronic and crippling lung disease. The eminent pathologist, Professor Keith Simpson, said after the inquest: 'I have known people who worked in the factory for only an afternoon to suffer the disease'.

Vandalism may not be avoidable as a by-product of Western civilisation (the kind of thing that gives you corn-flakes for breakfast, colour TV, dish-washers, Euro-TDs, keg beers and other goodies) but asbestosis is. You ought to support the mothers and children of Ringaskiddy in their fight against Lynch law and Lynch order. Is there no Flying Column, no Tom Barry to help them? Dr. Lucey, are you too busy worrying about contraceptives to hearken to their cries? I trust that none of those manly Guards batoning the pickets catches anything. What a country!

ON THE jobs front I see that only 19 per cent of last year's arts graduates at UCD are now actually at work of one sort or

another. One Education Correspondent of a daily newspaper says loftily that a BA is 'no longer useful as a job qualification, but as general education'. For the information of this Correspondent, who might be better suited to snagging turnips, a BA was never a 'qualification' for anything and *per se* is no indication that the holder is educated. Believe me, it is only in Ireland that possession of a university degree is regarded with awe, as if the boy/girl had somehow become one of God's elect and entitled to more of his doting parents' often hard-earned shillings.

Let those without a degree take heart: education is what remains when you have forgotten what you learned at school. Character and the knowledge that you must keep on learning are worth a dozen degrees; the major part of education really is knowing where to find things out. The late E.T. Keane, editor of the *Kilkenny People*, used to take a wicked delight in referring to the author of the latest stupidities of the then secretary of the Irish Tourist Board as 'Mr. J.P. O'Brien B.A. (Pass)!' He had the right idea.

THE only good joke I've come across recently is the *Irish*

Times headline: 'ACC chief to stay in job in spite of £4,000 pay cut'. Let me name this martyr; he is Michael Culligan. The cut leaves him with a mere £12,000 a year, a car, and the facility to borrow money at 3 per cent. Is it not clear that if all Irishmen accepted pay restraint of this order we'd have a great country? Yes, a great country — for the Michael Culligans. (The *Irish Times* does not say if Michael the Martyr is a B.A. Could he be like Dermot Considine, the retired bank manager who headed ICC, a graduate-with-honours of Ennis Fianna Fail University?)

BEFORE I close the books let me not forget to congratulate the farmers on their latest pay rise, another hundred million pounds (not enough, says Paddy Lane). Average wage, excluding farmers' dole, is now £8,500 a year free of all taxes. Their butter, milk, cheese, meat will, of course, cost more in the shops, but this will affect only non-farmers. Farmers, let me remind you, do not have university degrees; they're Irish though and the backbone of the country; isn't that enough? Has anyone a murrain handy?

LETTER to the EDITOR

NEW CAMPAIGN

A word of congratulations to the parties and groups who have come together to stand against the rising tide of nationalism and the murmurs of civil war. Let the socialists of Ireland not be mistaken: the republicans and nationalists are wittingly or unwittingly the tools of international capitalism. The Anglo-American capitalist leaders would be foolish if they did not wish to retard the development of class politics in Ireland. Another mad civil war, a religious war between Catholics and Protestants and it would take decades to heal the scars of war, allowing the external powers and their Irish minions to cement the island more solidly into the Euro-American bloc.

However it would be overestimating and elevating the intelligence of the hack Fianna Fail politicians and their runners to credit them with any conceptual grasp of global politics. They are howling and yelping for a united Ireland because, like the Paolovian rats, they have been conditioned to prattle about a united Ireland. Let there be a British intention to withdraw stated and a time span given, say they. And why not? "Get the Brits out of Ireland". And, says Michael O'Kennedy, prepare the mental climate for such a withdrawal and the final and inevitable united Ireland. "No problem, as Brian 'the Dolphin' Lenihan would say. The Prods and Taigues will lie down together and forget nine years of mindless tribal slaughter. At this time there cannot be many families in the major killing grounds who have not been touched in some way by the war of attrition.

The nationalists can hardly believe that the officially armed groups and the unofficially armed ones on the Protestant side are going to welcome a British initiative on changing the mental climate, or on withdrawing the British forces which, as they correctly see, would hand them over to the Maynooth dominated Southern state.

Some believe that Fianna Fail would stand idly by again

and allow a Northern civil war to take its course. I doubt it; pressure to intervene would be too great, but what this intervention would mean for Northern Catholics is another question.

The one thing we can be certain about is that no decent person in this country with a tittle of intelligence wants to have a civil war. We had one in the twenties to decide which conservative party would rule. We don't want one in the seventies to assert the aspiration of the Southern Catholics to a 32-county united (cemented in blood would be nearer the mark) Ireland. The Northern and Southern politicians who have previously shown no great reluctance to deal in the politics of death might find it a stimulating power game.

For the ordinary people North and South the claim to a united Ireland means more gravestones. We have enough dead and the chocolate generals of loyalism and republicanism have had the stage too long. It's time to build, to do something practical for a change, like introducing socialism and full employment.

JOHN CASEY

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THE PARK DANES

PARK PORTRAITS

In the closely-knit community, with its many interlinked family branches, it was not unusual for two or more members of a clan to have the same Christian as well as surnames. It was inevitable that this profusion of namesakes should produce its quota of nicknames to help distinguish one individual from another. The Shannys had the most numerous and distinctive names. Among these were: Paddy "Obalty", Pat "Tub", Patrick "Feeney", John "Woods", John "Pat", "Bolliger", "Cuckser", "Jones", "The Shawn", "Brass Band", "Sidey", "Forty", "Tooths" and "the Rock". The McNamara clan had two main family names McNamara "Larry" and McNamara "Duck", but five members were distinguished with individual appellations, "Monday", "Kiro", "Gillabawn", "Bull" and "Jigger". The Ryans also had their selection of titles: most members came from the Ryan "Malachy" family; others were called Ryan "Bulleen", Ryan "Puck" and Ryan "Whistler". The Cusacks sported such nicknames as "Blotto", "Rob", "Gitto" and "Gonner".

The Clancys had their "Tra", "Barrel", "Navan" and "Cagger". Tommy "Aw", "Doggy" and "Bawney" were scions of the Cross clan. Next came the Hannans with "Riask" and "Lefty". The names given to the two Kanes, "Cabbage" and "Medium", obviously reflected some local preoccupations. Two patriarchal Park figures were "Gladstone" Mullally and Patsy Quilligan, who was known as "the Big Fellow". One of the Lawlors was called "Sogger", and the traditional respect for learning found expression in the sobriquet, "the Scholar" McMahon. Nicknames were rarely given to women. Of all the men who came from Park, four, Mike Danagher, "Brass Band", Shanny, Tom "Bull" McNamara and Jimmy "Doggy" Cross are well worthy of the separate studies given here.

The first three portraits have been written by Kevin Hannon. And they are brilliant studies by a writer who knew the Parkmen intimately.

MIKE DANAGHER

Mike Danagher might have stepped out of the frame of an old family portrait, yet he was such a familiar sight that no one gave him a second glance. Except for his massive stature, he was regarded as being no different from any other Parkman bringing his vegetables to town. Admittedly he looked way out of proportion to the size of his unfortunate donkey, whose back was shaped like a horizontal crescent from the sheer weight pressing directly on the straddle, the top of which was lower than a line drawn between the animal's rump and shoulders. On closer scrutiny, however, the shrewd observer might have noticed the last frock coat and "full fall" trousers worn in public in Limerick. Though the suit was a relic of bygone days, the wearer never disrespected or desecrated it and always wore a bowler hat — never a cap, which would certainly have brought his sartorial splendour down to the level of Oxford bags!

This was an historical figure who was to be seen plying his venerable trade up to the sixties. He brought the past into the future, as it were, and, in a rapidly changing fashion world, continued to array himself in a style that was popular when the Young Irelanders were young. Like many of his contemporaries, in the ancient territory, he was reluctant to alter a way of life that was good enough for his father. The little plots, so intimately familiar to him since his boyhood, were almost as prolific as ever; donkeys were much the same in shape and temperament and the elder trees were only a little more gnarled. Like everything else around him, the clawhammer coat and full fall trousers had claims to antiquity and Mike Danagher was not the man to deny them.

Though his only mode of maintaining the forward movement of his heavily-burdened donkey, especially on the

long incline at the approach to O'Dwyer's Bridge, was the vigorous application of a short wattle on the tortured and unsteady flanks it was not a conscious act of cruelty. Animals, especially donkeys, were regarded as beasts of burden, having no feelings or frailties, to be used as God-made machines for man's benefit. In the absence of a common language, the Park people used the butt end of an ash plant as a means of communication between man and beast, and more importantly, as the only means of maintaining locomotion. Even where some slight semblance of emotional attachment developed between owner and animal, the traction of the loaded cart always remained the first and utmost consideration. Mike Danagher, the archetypal Parkman, was born into, and merely continued this age-old tradition.

BRASS BAND

No one now knows how Johnny Shanny got his nomenclature but it was not earned by his musical prowess. Johnny was born into an inheritance of the family gardens and a right to membership of the fraternity of Abbey fishermen. He was a gentle and remarkable man. Gaelic games were his first and last loves. Brass Band made a life-long study of hurling and football, attended as many matches as he possibly could and read all the available literature on past games. He was a unique hurler on the ditch and was an expert at gauging the games and players as they passed across the sporting stage. To his quest he brought an uncluttered mind, a flawless memory and a passionate energy. This combination made him a walking encyclopaedia. The Park "memory man" was regarded as being absolutely infallible in his chosen subject and his judgement was accepted as final in all cases of disputation.

Like others of the Shanny clan, Brass Band often laboured in the gardens until after sundown and rose the following morning at 3 a.m. After calling the other members of his crew, he would walk up the bank to Phelps' house (later "Willow Bank"), where their brecauns were kept moored since the previous day. Fishing commenced before "first gloss" (the initial reflection of daylight on the river before dawn) and, depending on the conditions and the time of the year, frequently went on all day.

While most Abbey fishermen became distant cousins of all humanity when they were fishing, Brass Band proved there was at least one gregarious member of the fraternity, for he sought after prospective bank-rambling conversationalists and often engaged them in lively banter, much to the chagrin of his other impatient crew members. Father Noonan, for many years chaplain to the Little Company of Mary nuns at Milford House, was a close friend of Johnny and the rest of the crew had a trying time in their attempts to break up conversations between the two men. The priest was known to the anglers of Plassey as "Blueskull" and was a likeable and true "brother of the angle". When he wasn't engaged in studying form — he liked a little flutter — or attending hurling matches, he spent most of his spare time fishing, usually between the Falls and Plassey Bridge, on the Limerick side. He also enjoyed an occasional pint and, when his finances permitted, he often made a sally across the bridge to Shanny's Pub to quench his thirst.

It was the custom of the Abbey fishermen to cook their meals on the south shore when fishing Tannyvoor. However, Brass Band's crew always cooked on the north shore, thus avoiding the inevitable long delay when the two sporting enthusiasts met. It was with the encouragement of his clerical and Waltonian friend that Johnny first ventured to a race meeting. On that occasion he had the good fortune of backing an 8/1 winner, only to discover when going to collect his winnings that the bookie had welshed. The imperturbable Parkman treated the incident with his characteristic and

philosophical good humour.

Brass Band was a sincere and religious man. He never missed the annual pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick, and never worked on Sundays. His application to labour in the fields and on the river was spontaneous. This work was only varied by the rising and setting of the sun and the changing of the seasons. To him hard work was not a necessary evil but a way of life.

Men such as Johny Shanny are not often met nowadays. He walked quietly through the Biblical "three score and ten" with a conscience as clear as the water on which he laboured. He carried his sporting lore as lightly as he carried the navy blue suits he always wore. He was one of the most amiable men ever to come from Park.

TOM BULL

Only in the baptismal registry files was he known as Thomas McNamara; in all other places he was "Tom Bull", or simply "the Bull", especially on the canal bank. He lived in a small iron-roofed cabin on the bank, a short distance from the railway bridge. This part of the old canal still bears his name. Indeed, the famous spot was the Sandycove and Pollock Holes for many generations of Limerick swimmers. Even today, with the once limpid waterway, choked up with a wild profusion of aquatic vegetation, and fringed on both sides by a jungle of alder trees, the clear, sandy pool is still a popular swimming place.

Tom Bull was an Abbey fisherman who knew the bed of the river as well as he knew the earthen floor of his own cabin. When fishing, during the dark summer nights, he reacted to the almost imperceptible breaks of rocks and snags as if his brecaun were equipped with radar. He was regarded by his colleagues as an expert netman, but this expertise never went to his head. He was wont to head into town with spoils of a successful day's fishing, ostensibly to replenish his larder, but only to get drunk, and, consequently, to disappoint the other members of his crew, who had to waste valuable time searching for a substitute. But to Tom there was nothing of any consequence beyond living from day to day. He always found it difficult, if not impossible, to face a day on the river with a few pounds in his pocket, being unhappy in the knowledge that he couldn't spend his sporadic earnings between Barnaluinge and Giree.

The results of his philosophy of life, his meagre, uncertain income and his partiality for the pint were reflected in the wretched condition of his hovel, which was devoid of even the elementary comforts. In latter years the roof became leaky, and the story is told of the Limerick publican, Christy Clohessy, and his wife taking shelter inside the doorway during a heavy summer shower. Hearing the plashing of a big leak on the earthen floor, Christy remarked: "Tis a wonder, Tom, you wouldn't fix that leak on a day like this". The droll Bull retorted: "Sure no one could fix the hole on such a wet day". "But why not have it done on a fine day; I will pay for the cost", persisted Christy. "Ah", said Tom, "what use would that be. sure it never leaks on a fine day!"

Bull's most important weekly exercise was the preparing and cooking of his dinner, or dinners, for enough food for several ploughman's meals was cooked in the one pot at the same time. This duty was religiously performed on Sundays, and for many an early morning angler on his way to Plassey a familiar sight was the crouched figure on the canal's edge, scrubbing a pile of potatoes and parsnips to a dazzling whiteness. The vegetables were placed in the large three-legged pot, with a Swede turnip, and perhaps, a carrot or two for a little colour and a few heads of cabbage. The principal ingredient was a half-pig's head or a few backbones or other such offals. The pot was placed on the open fire and allowed to simmer away while the merry cook hied himself off to the comfort of a Broad Street Tavern.

Returning in the late evening (Sunday drinking hours in those days were from 2 o'clock to 5 and from 7 to 9 p.m.) with a keen appetite, sharpened by the mile-long walk in the fresh air, Tom made inroads into the contents of the ample pot. The pot was left on the floor until further helpings were

partaken of during the course of the following week.

A number of hefty rats had taken up residence in the cabin and, having grown emboldened by the proprietor's indifference, and even tolerance, also showed a lively interest in the contents of the pot; so much so that they frequently nosed off the cover and gorged themselves to satisfaction. Tom did not begrudge them their repast, for, like Burns, he regarded the rats as "poor earth-born companions and fellow mortals". With their squeals and scamperings, they often broke the lonesome stillness of many a long winter night. The animals were fortunate in their choice of landlord, for Tom Bull was a gentle soul and never showed the slightest inclination to cause unnecessary suffering, even to the despised rat.

For many years, following the death of his mother, he had returned at nightfall, after a long day in the garden, or on the river, to his cheerless home. There was no loving wife or laughing children to greet him, no merrily dancing fire reflected on sparkling crockery, set on a clean table — only a guttering candle stab was all he had to light his way to the wretched pallet, with the gloom and emptiness being broken only by the rustlings of the rats. Yet, for all that, he was kind and humourous and a great favourite with the people around him. His name will endure in Limerick for as long as children swim and the old canal holds water.

DOGGY CROSS

One of the best-known of Limerick's many characters of fifty years ago was James "Doggy" Cross. The leading member of the Arch-Confraternity of his day, Doggy was renowned for his passionate — and sometimes violent — love of the Pope and the Redemptorists Fathers. His ebullient exploits and the colourful stories still told about him are now an accepted part of Limerick folklore.

Of burly physique, measuring six feet in height and weighing around the 18-stone mark, he was known throughout the entire city by almost every man, woman and child by the cognomen, "Doggy" — not that he bred, loved, trained or even walked a dog; on the contrary, second only to his wife, his next best friend was his horse. He was a simple, hard-working man, with an impetuous nature and a gruff, direct method of speaking. His lot in his early life was not an easy one, when he earned a precarious living as a hired carman at the dockside, and doing the odd job that came his way. In later life he became a contractor and amassed a sizeable fortune by supplying vegetables to the military barracks, hospitals and other such institutions.

Doggy's dress was as impressive as his physique. He was rarely seen in a coat of any kind. In season, and out, he would appear in the same rig-out; a grey-black shirt (British Army-type issue), dark trousers, with a 54 inch waistband, worn high up near chest level, striped braces 3 inches wide, nailed boots and, to crown it all, a yellow straw hat, with an extra wide rim, reminiscent of that worn in banana plantations in South America.

The big stone on the bank of the canal, near the Railway Bridge, was more than just another stone to Doggie. He used to sit on it for a rest during his frequent rambles along the canal bank. It was here, too that he sat and sweated out the clashes between his favourite hurling team, Claughaun, and their many adversaries from the city and county. When these games were played in the Markets' Field he kept in touch with the fortunes of his team through the exertions of a number of boys, whom he employed to make several sallies to the sportstound to keep him in touch with the score as the game progressed. So great was his regard for his team and so intense his interest in their fortunes, that he felt unable to endure the tension of the game as a spectator. He was obsessed with the fear of defeat and his distance from such a tragedy would, naturally, help to minimise his great disappointment. So Doggy was forced to sit out his desperate agony on the great stone, biting his moustache with passion and anxiety.

(continued on Page 7)

FAMILY PLANNING BREAKTHROUGH

Notwithstanding the attitude of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick, Dr. Newman, to the proposed Government changes in the laws relating to family planning, some significant developments have taken place in the policy of the Mid-Western Health Board on contraception. A special meeting of the members of the Board was held on Friday, March 3rd, to formulate the Board's views on the proposed legislation.

The following letter, sent by Charlie Haughey, Minister for Health to the chairman of each Health Board in the country, was discussed at the meeting:

The Government are committed to introducing legislation dealing with family planning and contraception and it is my intention before deciding on the legislation to undertake a widespread programme of consultation with all the bodies and groups who have an interest in this matter and who are in a position to assist me with advice and guidance.

While I would hope that the consultations would be wideranging and cover all aspects of the issues, it seems to me that the main questions for discussion are:

- (1) the extent to which public authorities, and in particular health boards, should be involved in the provision of advice on family planning.*
- (2) what changes, if any, should be made in the present law on the supply of contraceptives,*
- (3) to what extent, if any, and in relation to what group or groups of the population, should contraceptives be made available under the health services.*

As I am sure we can have a fruitful exchange of views on these important matters I would like to arrange an early meeting with members of Health Boards and their Chief Executive Officers. I would hope that each chairman could attend with two other Board members and I should be glad if you would arrange this for your Board.

I am asking the Department to get in touch with the Chief Executive Officer in regard to your proposals for the meeting.

At the Mid-Western Health Board meeting held on 17th February, 1978, two members, Sean Hillery, a chemist, and Dr. M. Carmody, were nominated to attend, with James Barrett, Board Chairman and the chief executive officer, John Hynes, at the meeting to be held with the Minister for Health.

After a long discussion on the three points mentioned in the Minister's letter it was decided to recommend to the Minister that legislation be introduced whereby:

- 1. Health Boards might provide a Family Planning service which would exclude abortion and sterilisation. Staff of the Board who would have conscientious objections to carrying out duties in relation to this service would have to be facilitated.*
- 2. The supply of contraceptives would be controlled under licence by the Minister for Health.*
- 3. Contraceptives would be made available to married couples only.*

Family planning is a basic civil and human right. This fact is widely accepted throughout the world. On this ground the second and third recommendations of the Board must be opposed as being undemocratic and restrictive. Single people can — and do — have families. The attempt to restrict contraceptives supply to married people only and their control to the Minister for Health is impractical and certain to be rejected on a large scale basis if these recommendations are accepted by the Minister.

But the Board's first recommendation is a positive one for family planning in the Republic. Since its adoption, the Board's policy on contraception has undergone a dramatic change. For the first time ever the Board has paid pharmacists in the Mid-West region for contraceptives supplied to medical card holders on a general medical services prescription. Pharmacists have already been paid for diaphragms, jelly, etc. supplied to patients.

If a medical card holder wishes to avail of the scheme, the procedure is as follows: After the pharmacist has supplied the medical card holder with the contraceptives required, the pharmacist then sends the priced prescription form to the Health Board (not to Payments Board) with a request for payment under the heading "special items" and enclosing a statement certifying that the contraceptives are required "on health grounds". As the Pill is prescribed as a "cycle regulator" in Ireland, so now are the other contraceptives prescribed "on health grounds". This formula permits the Health Board to justify its payments to pharmacists for the contraceptives supplied.

Despite this typical Irish piece of double-think, the move is a welcome and progressive one and represents a historic breakthrough for family planning in Limerick and in the country generally.

EDNA O'BRIEN'S LIMERICK

Edna O'Brien's book *Mother Ireland* was published in a paperback edition earlier this year. The blurb claimed that "*Mother Ireland* is an autobiographical tapestry; recollections of an Irish childhood linked to an account of a journey there today, interwoven with fragments of Irish mythology, history and hearsay. All the essential poetry, beauty, strangeness,

simplicities, superstitions and fears of rural Ireland are evoked by Edna O'Brien's lyrical and personal style . . ."

The book does not live up to these extravagant claims. Limerick readers will be disappointed by the superficial and predictable treatment the city and its people are given. Edna O'Brien was born and reared in Tuamgraney, Co. Clare, about twenty miles from Limerick, and she has often visited the city. However, in *Mother Ireland* she shows little understanding of the various strands that make up the city's life and offers no new insights on its history and its present-day problems.

Here is how she describes Limerick on page 38:

There had been a pogrom in Limerick half a century before and a Redemptorist priest told the faithful to stone the moneylenders which they did. Limerick was an exemplary

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city. Everyone flocked to confraternities. The friars in their brown robes and sandals moved through the city doing corporal works of mercy. At the side door of the friary there would be a huddle of people, some who had come to beg for bread and soup, others waiting to hand in their offerings to have masses said for their departed. At ten or eleven years, when on a visit, you sat in a chapel with your legs crossed and were asked by an incensed lady to please uncross them at once. 'Did you know', she said, 'that Our Lady blushes whenever a woman does such an indecent thing'.

Then Edna O'Brien goes on to quote eight lines of a poem. This poem first appeared in printed form in the *Limerick Socialist* in April 1972 but Edna O'Brien does not acknowledge this fact. Five of the eight lines are misquoted which lessens the effect of the verses. In response to requests from a number of our readers we again publish this poem in its complete and original form:

City of beautiful churches and spires,
City of pubs and lowly desires,
City of gossips that tell what they're told
City of youth that just waits to grow old.

Society's city, home of the snob,
Show me your penny before you hob-nob,
Do have some coffee, Oh do have a bun
Do what the others do, do 'cause it's done.

Conventional city, Victorian smug,
Peas in their little pods, bugs in their rugs,
Here is no night life, no Stygian fun,
They withstand temptation because there is none.

Resenting the outsider's critical speech,
Playing a part they are frightened to cease,
Professing a culture that they never knew,
Living their lives out with nothing to do.

The story of the poem's origin is an interesting one. The verses were found, almost a decade ago, by a waiter in the Intercontinental Hotel (now Jury's), Limerick, written on the back of a menu card. The poem was unsigned and untitled. The enlightened waiter was impressed and had two copies typed; one of these copies later found its way to the *Limerick Socialist*. The poem says more about Limerick — and Irish-life than Edna O'Brien and many another writer. The unknown poet certainly has no need to hide his or her talent on the back of a menu card

DOGGY CROSS

(continued from Page 5)

feverishly waiting for the good or bad tidings, as each game ebbed and flowed to its final whistle.

Though he was a "pillar" of the Confraternity and religious to the point of being fanatical, Doggy could be unconsciously entertaining and amusing when going about his workday duties. He frequently failed to realise the implications of what he said and so he rarely knew when someone was offended by his blunt and direct way of speaking. Even in his relations with his wife Doggy could not change his basic mode of expression. On one occasion, during a verbal battle with his spouse, who had described him as "being as stubborn as a mule", he retorted: "That may be so, I am stubborn, but never once did I buck-kick you out of the bed, even when we slept back-to-back!"

Many stories, some of them apocryphal, are told about the big carman. One of Doggy's jobs entailed delivering gravel to various parts of the city. When a doctor asked him to bring a load to his house, to be spread on the passageway leading to the building, the Parkman promptly complied. In the early afternoon of the following day he duly arrived at the doctor's door with the gravel. He rang the bell and immediately the door was opened by a nurse. "What is it you want?" she enquired. "I have the gravel", Doggy gruffly replied. (Gravel

also means a collection of small stones (gall stones) in the kidneys or bladder). "Come in and get ready for the doctor", said the nurse, showing the carman into the surgery. "Take off your trousers. The doctor will be with you in a minute", the nurse ordered. "What do you mean", asked the bemused man. "Haven't you got the gravel?" came the nurse's impatient ripost. "I have", said Doggy, "but surely you don't think I have it in the arse of my trousers!"

Another story caused great merriment among Confraternity members in the less permissive Limerick of the twenties. Around 1928 Doggy called to the Mount St. Alphonsus monastery to see Father McLoughlin, the direct of the Confraternity. The priest arrived on the scene and, apologetically addressing Doggy said: "Mr. Cross, if you'll excuse me . . . I'll not keep you waiting for more than ten minutes . . ." "That's alright, Father; I don't mind. Sure I can be arsing around here, if I have to, till midnight", casually came the rejoinder, as the perplexed priest stared hard. This tale did the rounds and ever since the phrase "arsing around like Doggy Cross" has remained a familiar Limerick expression.

But once Doggy was the victim of a cruel joke inflicted on him by one of his so-called friends. He travelled to Kilkee by the early morning train — his wife, who had a small huckster shop, had arranged to join him later that evening. Scarcely had he arrived at his "digs" when the landlady handed him a telegram, with the terse message: "Come quick, wife died suddenly this afternoon". The badly shocked Doggy got the next bus home, only to find his wife in deep conversation with a neighbour when he arrived.

The best stories told about him all have a religious flavour. An old-time, fire-and-brimstone, blood-and-thunder mission was building up to its closing crescendo at the "Fathers". For two weeks the innocent, hard-working Parkmen, who could hardly keep their eyes open long enough to say the Rosary, were lectured and hectorated on the evils of their sinful lives and urged to desist from the Seven Deadly Sins — sins that they had not the time, money or energy to commit. The closing of the mission came and, as each man fervently clasped his lighted candle, the black-robed figure in the pulpit held aloft his crucifix and, in a voice like a fog-horn, roared to the captive congregation: "Do you renounce the Devil?" "We do", replied the men in unison. The priest warmed to his task and, increasing the volume and content of his question again asked: "Do you renounce the Devil and all his works and all his pomps?" "We do" came the well-conditioned chorus. But the Redemptorist was far from satisfied. Working himself up to a paroxysm bordering on hysteria, the sweating priest asked his question for the third time and added: "Louder! Louder! Let them hear you even in the depths of Hell! Before the congregation could get time to respond Doggy bawled out in a mad frenzy of religious intoxication: "We do, the Hoor; WE DO!"

But the highest point of Doggy's fervour was his pilgrimage to Rome to see his beloved Pope. Dressed in his Sunday best, the Parkman waited in the middle of his fellow pilgrims for the pontiff to enter the room for the group audience. When the Pope duly appeared, Doggy was beside himself with excitement. Surging spontaneously forward, the burly carter bullocked his way through the closely-packed crowd until he reached the great man. Grasping the hand of the startled Pope in his huge fist, Doggy solemnly assured him: "Jasus, Holy Father, we'd die for you in Park!"

Yet another story involves the Limerick-born Father Creagh, the director of the Confraternity during the 1904 pogrom in the city. After the members had been stirred up by an anti-Semitic sermon, Doggy was making his way home by way of Colloony Street, the "Little Jerusalem" of Limerick. As an old, bearded Jew trotted along the footpath, Doggy lashed out and capsized him. "Why did you do that to me? I did nothing to you", queried the plaintive victim. "Ye crucified Christ", shouted the enraged Doggy. "But that happened two thousand years ago", protested the flattened Jew. "Makes no difference", replied his towering protagonist, "I only heard about it tonight!"

Such a man was James Doggy Cross, the Park prototype of Burl Ives.

A WALL STREET STORY - WITH A DIFFERENCE

The first job I got in New York was in a bank. All of us have little milestones of some sort in our lives and the job in the bank was such for me. I went to New York at a time when unemployment was on an upward swing so that the choice of jobs was pretty limited and one took what was offered. I remember queueing in the loading bay of the *New York Times* hoping for a night's work loading the delivery trucks, but without success.

So when I was offered a job as a cleaner in a large bank in Wall Street I took it without hesitation. We went to work about six o'clock in the evening and we could be seen making our way up the canyon of skyscrapers in faded denims, sneakers and sweat shirts, with our cleaner's uniform and midnight sandwiches in shoddy plastic bags, as the bankers and the lords of American capitalism purred down the street of gold in black limousines, the faceless men of money invisible behind curtained windows.

Sometimes one of the long black beetles would stop at a tavern close to the entrance of the street and a commissionaire would escort the occupants inside. We always passed it on the way from the underground station, a millionaire's pub: soft lights, oak panelled walls, velvet curtains, richly carpeted and upholstered, shining dim and golden behind modest window panes in the approaching twilight. I expect it was a member's only club and I know that any working man who had the temerity to pass the portals would have caused consternation.

The soft golden light and the unobtrusive opulence of the interior became to me a symbol of the American dream. We passed outside catching glimpses of the money lords drinking brandies and liquors. They could and did spend more on a meal than one of us earned in a week. The American dream in those unquestioning days before Watergate was that in the States there is the possibility of wealth and riches for all and it depends on the initiative of the individual to go out and 'make good', in the old fashioned phrase. I have no doubt but that some of my workmates held and entertained such thoughts and I am equally certain that none of them ever sat under the flickering gold of the club's chandelier or in any similar such place.

The people who cleaned and polished the floors, the walls and the toilets of the Chemical Bank were at the bottom of the New York worker pool: Casta Ricans, Haitians, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Poles, Lithuanians and Guatemalans.

There was Vinnie the Puerto Rican with a Yul Brynner pate and a game leg. Sometimes at weekends he asked me to run the razor on the top of his skull before he took off for a weekend of debauchery. His sexual exploits would have made a worthwhile appendix to the Kama Sutra if there had been a word of truth in his stories. The locker full of pornographic pictures and sex magazines probably contributed more to his stories than any personal experiences. His wife had thrown him out and taken to religion, Seventh Day Evangelism, and his son was starting in an inauspicious manner on a life of crime.

Then there was the Haitian, Jean. He was really half wild: popping eyes, mad laugh, instant horse-play. Once he caught me reading the Sunday edition of *The New York Times* on a Wednesday. "What the hell man you do anyway reading the Sunday paper on a Wednesday". He was the only one who ever talked of politics. "Going back to Haiti man with a gun man, I

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JOHN CASEY

shoot Papa Doc and Baby Doc". Papa Doc died in his bed of natural causes and Baby Doc has refined and polished his father's dictatorship.

Alfredo showed me how to mop the floor, wash down the walls and disinfect the urinals. He was a Colombian cobbler who couldn't make a living in his own country. He had a wife and a few kids and he cobbled by day and cleaned by night; He was really taken by the States and I suppose it was hard to blame him; he had left the poverty of Colombia for a vastly superior lifestyle. He never seemed to have noticed that as Neruda wrote:

"The Jehovah parcelled out the earth
to Coca Cola, Inc., Anaconda
Ford Motors and other entities':
The Fruit Company, Inc."

There was the Guatemalan who continued to believe that I was an illegal immigrant, that being the only way he could account for someone speaking fairly fluent English and slogging it out for a pittance in the sweat of the early morning with Spanish-Americans and Eastern European refugees.

I will never know what the Eastern Europeans were doing; if this was their brave new world it had its definite horizon, a toilet bowl. The Spanish-speaking Americans could only take what was offered, in this case the work that the American blacks spurned.

The only other native English speaker I encountered during my period at the bank was an American Vietnam veteran called O'Reilly, whose father came from Cavan. He was a tall blonde young man with drooping moustaches and was training to be a boss, a superintendent of toilet cleaners and floor polishers. One could only hope that he had achieved more satisfaction in his period in Vietnam than anything he hoped for as an inspector of stains at the Chemical Bank of America.

The foreman was a Colombian promoted for his zeal in driving and harassing the workers. He was particularly hard on his fellow countrymen, and while I was there, the Colombian cobbler requested a transfer to another building after a period of nightly arguments with the boss. He did in fact cow the male workers and it was the girls who took him on head-on. The shop steward, a handsome black girl from Costa Rica, accused him of hounding her members and threatened to bring in the union.

Frightened but unwilling to yield, he rounded on them two nights afterwards accusing them of slacking and of talking and smoking during working hours. The shop steward rang the union and he went into a slinking retreat. I tried to stir up the men but without any immediate result except an increase in awareness. When eventually I did more to another job nothing would convince the Guatemalan but that 'the immigration people' were 'on to me'.